

Ask, Don't Tell

Ask, Encourage, and Praise

Parents (and teachers) who learn this simple strategy will make great progress in their relationships with their students! Telling usually involves making value judgments, which have become the norm in our educational system. Students have become accustomed to hearing, "You missed 15 problems on your final exam," or "No, that's not right, do it again." Or "If you take your eyes off your paper, I'll assume you're cheating and give you an F." or "I expect you to know all this material by tomorrow." The negative implications of such statements are apparent, yet educators seem reluctant to re-think their approach. Another facet of the "Ask, don't tell" ideal has to do with allowing the student the freedom to experiment **and to fail!!** Teachers who spoon feed every detail (i.e. do it **exactly** this way, precisely the way I told you - especially to intermediate and advanced students) are robbing their students of the chance to analyze and problem-solve for themselves. Much work by child psychologists, cognitivists, and educators has been done which suggest that learning carries more meaning, is retained better and longer, is conceptualized sooner, is able to be transferred with more regularity, etc. when the student has had the opportunity to explore, discover, fail, and experiment as part of the learning process. The wise parent and/or teacher uses statements like, "Did you like the way that phrase sounded?" "What can you do to make it better?" "What was your bow doing to get that sound?" "What were your fingers doing differently?" etc. This strategy gives the student the feeling he has discovered the solution, which stimulates further experimentation (practice) and discovery (reward) - a self-perpetuating recipe!